

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL  
RELEASED BY THE MILITARY  
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF**  
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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
**COMMANDER, MARINE FORCES RESERVE**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL**  
**CONCERNING**  
**– RECRUITING, RETENTION AND END STRENGTH –**  
**ON**  
**MARCH 3, 2009**

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Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my honor to speak with you today concerning your Marine Corps Reserve.

On behalf of all our Marines, sailors and their families, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Subcommittee for its continued support. The support of Congress and the American people reveal both a commitment to ensure the common defense and a genuine concern for the welfare of our Reserve Marines, sailors and their families.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Your Marine Corps Reserve - a primarily Operational Reserve - continues to be firmly committed to, and capable of, war fighting excellence. As a full, vested partner to the Total Force Marine Corps, we faithfully continue our steadfast commitment to provide Reserve units and personnel who can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their Active Component counterparts while seamlessly performing in all contingencies, exercises and operations.

Since 9/11, more than 52,306 Reserve Marines and approximately 99 percent of Selected Marine Corps Reserve units were activated with 98 percent of those units having deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. Although the operational tempo has been extremely high for the Marine Corps Reserve, I believe our current challenges in meeting authorized Selected Marine Corps Reserve end strength is a temporary by-product of the Marine Corps' accelerated build to a 202,000 Active Component Marine Corps.

Your Marine Corps Reserve will continue to answer the clarion call to arms in defense of this great Nation – whether in Iraq today, Afghanistan tomorrow or in subsequent campaigns of The Long War.

## **II. END STRENGTH**

The Selected Marine Corps Reserve is comprised of Reserve unit Marines, Active Reserve Marines, Individual Mobilization Augmentees, and Reserve Marines in the training pipeline, which when added together, form the inventory to end strength in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Although we continue to benefit from strong volunteerism to serve by our Reserve Marines since 9/11, we have noticed a recent decline in percentage of authorized end strength. Fiscal Years

2002 to 2005 had percentages of authorized end strength above 100 percent and Fiscal Year 2006 percentage of authorized end strength at 99.71 percent. Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008 percentages of authorized end strength were at 97.36 and 94.76 percent - shortfalls of 1,044 and 2,077 Marines respectively. This resulted in the only fiscal years since 9/11 that the Selected Marine Corps Reserve fell below the Title 10-allowable three percent variance from authorization.

As previously stated in my testimonies before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees' Subcommittees on Defense during 2008, we anticipated an adverse affect on meeting an acceptable percentage of authorized Marine Corps Selected Reserve end strength as greater numbers of Reserve Component Marines volunteered for full-time active duty due to the Marine Corps' accelerated build to a 202,000 Active Component Marine Corps.

During the past fiscal year, we accepted the short-term risk in our ability to obtain our Selected Marine Corps Reserve Component end strength of 39,600 as the Reserve accession plans were adjusted and our experienced and combat tested Reserve Marines were encouraged to transition back to active duty to support the build effort, and they responded in force: From 2007 to present, approximately 1,946 Reserve Marines returned to, or are awaiting return to, active duty.

The fact is that the Active Component Marine Corps relies heavily upon augmentation and reinforcement provided by our Reserve Marines. I firmly believe our authorized end strength of 39,600 is still highly relevant and appropriate, and will consequently drive recruiting and retention. This number provides us with the Marines we require to support the Force and to achieve our goal of a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Additionally, it is worth noting, the Marine Corps is on pace to reach an active duty end strength of 202,000 by the end of Fiscal Year 2009, which will enable the Marine Corps to refocus the Reserve recruiting and retention efforts to achieve the expected percentage of authorized Selected Marine Corps Reserve Component end strength. The bonuses and incentives for recruiting and retention provided by the Congress are essential tools for helping us accomplish this goal and I thank you for your continued support.

### **III. RECRUITING**

The Marine Corps is unique in that all recruiting efforts (officer, enlisted, regular, Reserve, and prior-service) fall under the direction of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

Operationally, this provides the Marine Corps with tremendous flexibility and unity of command in order to annually meet Total Force Marine Corps objectives.

Like the Active Component, Marine Corps Reserve units primarily rely upon a first term enlisted force. Currently, the Marine Corps Reserve continues to recruit and retain quality men and women willing to manage commitments to their families, their communities, their civilian careers, and their Corps. Despite high operational tempo, the morale and patriotic spirit of Reserve Marines, their families, and employers remains extraordinarily high.

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goal for non-prior service recruiting (5,287) and exceeded its goal for prior service recruiting (2,672 enlisted Marines) during Fiscal Year 2007 and achieved 100 percent of its recruiting goal for non-prior service recruiting (4,235) and prior service recruiting (4,501) in Fiscal Year 2008. As of Feb. 1, 2009, 1,756 non-prior service and 1,227 enlisted prior service Marines have been accessed, which reflects 48 percent of the annual enlisted recruiting mission for the Selected Marine Corps Reserve. We fully expect to meet our Selected Marine Corps Reserve recruiting goals again this year.

An initiative implemented during June 2006 at Marine Forces Reserve to enhance recruiting efforts of prior service Marines was the Selected Marine Corps Reserve Affiliation Involuntary Activation Deferral policy. Realizing that deployments take a toll on Active Component Marines, causing some to transition from active duty because of high personnel tempo, we continue to offer this program. This program allows a Marine who has recently deployed an option for a two-year deferral from involuntary activation if they join a Selected Marine Corps Reserve unit after transitioning from active duty. The intent of the two-year involuntary deferral is to allow transitioning Marines the opportunity to participate in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve without sacrificing the ability to build a new civilian career.

Junior officer recruiting and consequently meeting our Reserve company grade requirement remains the most challenging area. Historically, the Active Component Marine Corps has been the source of company grade officers to the Selected Marine Corps Reserve, due to initial active duty contractual requirements of all Reserve-commissioned officers. There are, however, three programs in place now that enable Reserve officer accessions without the typical three to four-year active duty obligation: the Reserve Enlisted Commissioning Program (RECP), the Meritorious Commissioning Program – Reserve (MCP-R) and the Officer Candidate Course – Reserve (OCC-R).

These programs strive to increase the number and quality of company grade officers within deploying Reserve units while addressing our overall shortage of junior officers in our Reserve units. The three programs combined to access 108 Reserve officers during Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008, and are an essential tool to help mitigate company grade officer shortages in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Eligibility for the RECP was expanded to qualified Active Duty enlisted Marines. The MCP-R was established for qualified enlisted Marines, Reserve and Active, who possess an Associates Degree or equivalent number of semester hours. The third program, the OCC-R, has proven to be the most successful as 93 candidates have been commissioned second lieutenants in the Marine Corps Reserve during Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008. We anticipate commissioning between 50 and 75 more second lieutenants through the OCC-R this fiscal year.

The OCC-R focuses on ground-related billets, with an emphasis on ground combat and combat service support within Reserve units that are scheduled for mobilization. The priority to recruit candidates is tied to the Marine Forces Reserve Force Generation Model. Refinement of the OCC-R program to target geographic company grade officer shortfalls is a logical next step.

#### **IV. RETENTION**

All subordinate commanders and senior enlisted leaders at each echelon of command are required to retain quality Marines. On a monthly basis, these leaders identify Marines who either have to re-enlist or extend. Identified Marines are counseled concerning the opportunity for their retention in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Enlisted retention trends remain a concern and are being monitored very closely, but were obviously affected by the Active Component 202,000 build. The good news is that the Active Component Marine Corps is no longer making a concerted effort to draw personnel from the Selected Marine Corps Reserve to active duty.

For Fiscal Year 2008, Reserve officer retention remained at the same level as during the previous fiscal year, which was above historic levels.

We continue to offer retention incentives for enlisted Marines in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve, to include the maximum allowable \$15,000 Selected Marine Corps Reserve Affiliation Bonus for an initial three-year commitment. We also offer a \$10,000 Selected Marine Corps

Reserve Officer Affiliation Bonus for those officers who affiliate with a Selected Marine Corps Reserve unit and agree to participate for three years. I greatly appreciate the continuance of the increased reenlistment incentive initially provided in the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act.

These incentives are necessary tools to help us retain quality Marines and consequently assist us in achieving an acceptable percentage of authorized Selected Reserve end strength.

I read with interest the Memorandum of July 24, 2008, by Secretary Gates concerning the recommendations of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves. I am pleased to see the strong emphasis on study of the various recommendations that pertain to the Continuum of Service personnel management construct. As the Continuum of Service concept is refined, it should facilitate the affiliation of prior service Marines into the Selected Marine Corps Reserve as well as retain those who are serving.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

More than seven years into The Long War, the Marine Corps Reserve continues to shoulder the war fighting burden with our Active Component counterparts. Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, as well as support to Combatant Commanders' Theater Support Cooperation Exercises, have required continuous activations of Selected Marine Corps Reserve forces. We'll continue to focus upon the current and future commitments of the Total Force Marine Corps and the corresponding challenges of Reserve recruiting, retention and Selected Reserve end strength to ensure that the Marine Corps Reserve remains ready to fight. Thank you for your continued support. Semper Fidelis.